Meat (or How to Kill Oedipus in Cyberspace)

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> That fall, all that the Mission talked about was control: arms control, information control, resources control, psycho-political control, population control, control of the almost super-natural inflation, control of terrain through the Strategy of the Periphery. But when the talk had passed, the only thing left standing up that looked true was your sense of how out of control things really were. (Herr, 1979: 45)

> Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* becomes *Apocalypse Now*. In the early days of the Vietnam conflict CIA agents set up their Ops in remote outposts, requisitioned private armies, overawed the superstitious natives and achieved the status of white Gods. So the context of 19th-century colonialism was briefly duplicated. That is what writing is about: time-travel. (Burroughs, 1992: 43)

> 'My meat won't do it, and I can't make it work from this side . . .'
> '*What* side?'
> 'On-line. From inside the system. I'm not in the meat anymore, I told you, I got out of my box.' (Cadigan, 1991: 301)

Antioedipus is an anticipatively assembled inducer for the replay of geohistory in hypermedia, a social-systemic fast feed-forward through machinic delirium. While tracking Artaud across the plane it discovers a cosmic catatonic abstract body that both repels its parts (deterritorializing them [from each other]) and attracts them (reterritorializing them [upon itself]), in a process that reconnects the parts through deterritorium as rhizomatic nets conducting schizogeneses.

Sense reaches absolute zero.

> The body without organs is the matter that always fills space to given degrees of intensity, and the partial objects are these degrees, these intensive parts that produce the real in space starting from matter as intensity = 0. The body without organs is the immanent substance, in the most Spinozist sense of the word; and the partial objects are like its ultimate attributes, which belong to it precisely insofar as they are really distinct and cannot on this account exclude or oppose one another. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 327)

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Deleuze and Guattari spring schizophrenia from the grid of representation, insisting that Artaud was exploring the body. The intensive 'infrastructure' of every delirium is machinery, with the body without organs as a component.

BWO, matter degree-0 as a nonformal singularization function, is 'not actual, but virtual-real' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988:100): spontaneous population-hyperbehaviour inducing a convergent wave which cannot be assimilated to the categories of modern (linear) science. BWOs are machinic-additional wholes or surplus products rather than logical-substitutive wholes, augmenting a multiplicity with emergent (synthetic) capabilities rather than totalizing the content of a set. This is the materialist sense of 'system': the exteriority of the whole to its parts with concomitant synthetic interactivity – real influence rather than generic representation.

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Cybernetics folds pragmatism into involutionary technical runaway.

Punk arises within the culture of universal prostitution and laughs at the death of the social.

'No longer resisting the flow of events or pretending to chart a course through them' (Kadrey, 1988:21) cyberpunk soaks up the worst from both. Its compulsive migrations into computer systems register a desperate scrabbling to escape from the clumsily underdesigned, theopolitically mutilated, techno-industrially pressure-cooked and data-baked, retrovirally diseased, tortured, shredded zombie meat. This is no longer a departure from matter in the direction of spirit or the Ideas where the self will find its home, but a dismantling of the self within a machinic matrix: not disembodied but disorganized. An out to body experience.

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The machinic unconscious tends only to flee, across a primary-process topography that is shaped by pain-gradients and escape thresholds. What registers for the secondary process as memory, experience, data-acquisition, is for the primary process, scarring, damage, sticky microsofted irritations.

As matter-energy flows are captured by attractors the BWO is stratified as macro- and micro-organisms. 'Every coupling of machines, every production of a machine, every sound of a machine running, has become unbearable to the body without organs. Beneath the organs it senses larvae and disgusting worms, and the action of a God who botches or strangles it through organization' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984:9). Gathering in the tributary attractor basins of social megamachinery, fluctuations are case-packed into reproducible units – geochemical, bio-organic, cultural – encrusted within security pods.

Oedipus is a box at the end of the world, glued to the monitor, watching it all come apart.

The horror.

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The heart of darkness spins narrative from durations of waiting to get there. 'I had plenty of time for meditation' mutters Marlow, '. . . now and then I would give some thought to Kurtz' (Conrad, 1989: 62).

When you try to visualize Kurtz nothing comes except a shape obliterating light, something dark and complicated, like a giant spider, waiting at the end of the river, drawing you up to it. Somewhere far back – at an indiscernible point closing down a fantasy of innocent sunlight – a threshold was crossed, and you strayed into the web.

With each telling of the story Kurtz becomes colder, darker, more inevitable, fatally anticipating K-virus catastrophe, as if a tendril of tomorrow were burrowing back. What has he found among these African or Cambodian aboriginals, with their 'faces like grotesque masks' (Conrad, 1989: 40)? There are reports of military bestiality, butchery, carnage, head-hunting, collecting ears, severing the vaccinated arms from children. The Kurtz-process masks itself in wolf-pelts of regression, as if returning to the repressed, discovering a lost truth, excavating the fossils of monsters.

> Going up that river was like travelling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. . . . The long stretches of waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of overshadowed distances. . . . We were wanderers on prehistoric earth, on an earth that wore the aspect of an unknown planet. (Conrad, 1989: 66–8).

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Territorial production codes by deterritorializing; unfixing by hunter-gathering, according to a cold or metastatic cultural code that equilibrates on a (Bateson) 'plateau'. Earth begins its migration-in-place towards the globe.

> The earth is the primitive, savage unity of desire and production . . . the great unengendered stasis . . . quasi-cause of production and the object of desire (it is on the earth that desire becomes bound to its own repression). . . . The primitive territorial machine, with its immobile motor, the earth, is already a social machine, a megamachine, that codes the flows of production. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 140–2)

Coding the body pins it out in extension, conducting descendency away from the germo-somatic 'meat circuit' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 152) and its cyberplexive tangles. The social or somatic being is forbidden from being meat (disinherited animal tissue simultaneous with fate, spontaneous, orphan and mutable matter) and

is borne instead towards the humanity of the organic self or body-for-itself; a corporealized person who is born, lives and dies.

> Man must constitute himself through the repression of the intense germinal influx, the great biocosmic memory that threatens to deluge every attempt at collectivity. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 190)

Incest and cannibalism are proscribed loops, short-circuits, the avatars of a delirium indifferent to persons which the codes must segregate; condensing a totemic social order protected by taboo. Aboriginal codes ritualistically constitute a somatic realm of ancestrally invested bodies and cooked meat, immunizing it against uncoded tracts populated by enemies, prey animals, unsettled spirits, magical plants and unprocessed corpses.

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Arriving reprocessed from inexistence at phase-transition into Hell or the future, you slide an interlock-pin into its sub-cortical socket, shifting to the other side of the screen (coma-zoned infotech undeath). Pandemonium scrolls out in silence. Decayed pixel-dust drifts into grey dunes. (Didn't anyone tell you not to play with the switches?)

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The function of shamanism is to implement what is forbidden, exactly and comprehensively as and why it is forbidden, but in specially segregated compartments of the socius, where it provides a metacoding apparatus, meticulously quarantined against 'the transmissibility of taboo' (Freud, 19??: 73) with its 'power of infection or contagion' (Freud, 19??: 75). It enables the codes of the primitive socius to operate upon themselves, to monitor and adjust themselves, according to a secondary regulation that is repressed in general even whilst it is encouraged in particular. An epidemic shamanism – feeding all the codes back upon themselves – threatens absolute social disaster.

> The meaning of 'taboo', as we see it, diverges in two contrary directions. To us it means on the one hand, 'sacred', 'consecrated', and on the other 'uncanny', 'dangerous', 'forbidden', 'unclean'. (Freud, 1991: 71)

The shaman has a double aspect, at once monster and social agent, creature of darkness and of light, tending in one direction towards the explorer-werewolf, scrambling the codes in contemporaneity with all generations, and in the other towards the bureaucrat-priest, redoubling the codes with a reflexive traditional authority. In the aboriginal socius '[f]ear has not yet split up into the two forms into which it later develops: veneration and horror' (Freud, 1991: 78) and shamans are

not 'persons, but rather the intensive variations of a "vibratory spiralling movement", inclusive disjunctions, necessarily twin states through which a subject passes on the cosmic egg' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 158) (= BWO).

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Ginzberg (1991) suggests that the carnivorous hunter-gatherers who give rise to shamanic cultures code the reappearance of their prey-animal as a return from the dead, responsive to magical ritual, and cartographically informative for explorers of alternative mortuary spaces. Shamans, werewolves and berserkers are primitively indistinct 'half-humans' who are processed as meat, cross into death-zones, and migrate through alternative animalities.

Shamanic becoming-an-animal assembles a circuit 'that produces werewolves by feedback effect' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 245) looping predator and prey into an autopredation, and 'societies, even primitive societies, have always appropriated these becomings in order to break them, reduce them to relations of totemic or symbolic correspondence' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988: 247–8).

> The complete series of initiatory ceremonies for the Coast Pomo [sic] shamans has the significant name 'cutting'. (Eliade, 1991: 54–5)

Speed-rush through cut-up shamanic meat delirium.

> [T]he spirits came down and cut him in pieces, also chopping off his hands . . . tore out his heart and threw it into a pot . . . chopped his body into bits . . . forged his head . . . changed his eyes . . . pierced his ears . . . torture him, strike him, cut his body with knives . . . throw his head into a cauldron, where it is melted with certain metal pieces . . . kill him, open his body, remove the organs . . . tore out his tongue . . . cut his head open, take out his brains . . . plant barbed hooks on the tips of his fingers . . . the . . . limbs are removed and disjointed with an iron hook; the bones are cleaned, the flesh scraped, the body fluids thrown away, and the eyes torn from their sockets . . . his flesh is cooked . . . reduced to a skeleton . . . after this operation all the bones are gathered up and fastened together with iron . . . a second and even a third skin appears. (Eliade, 1991: 56–7)

Shamanism does not await postmodernity to mobilize an imagery of surgical interventions and dissections, body piercing, organ transplantation, prosthetic adjustments with nonbiotic components and wrappings in artificial skin.

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Terminator: an astronomical division between the illuminated side of a cold body and its dark side, describing a boundary. The *Terminator* movies feature a bio-technical reconstruct called Arnold Schwarzenegger, wrapped in level after level of artificiality, as a Turing-test nightmare retro-infiltrated to forestall human resistance to a neo-replicator usurpation. The shamanic material of the films includes time travel, asymmetric visual damage, dismemberment, ambivalence,

melting bodies, with Skynet as Bird-of-Prey Mother. The Oedipal hero, John Connor, is contemporary with his own father.

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As soon as there is a code there is an ulterior zone, a heart of darkness, but this only becomes geographically demarcated with the arrival of the bounded city and agricultural segmentation. The aboriginal social machine divides the people upon an undivided territory (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 145), rather than the reverse, dividing time within space, separating the simultaneous or germinal time of the intense earth – the dream time – from the somatic time of the generational socius, with its ancestors, tribal elders and lines of filiation.

> The despot is the paranoiac: there is no longer any reason to forego such a statement, once one has freed oneself from the characteristic familialism of the concept of paranoia in psychoanalysis and psychiatry, and provided one sees in paranoia a type of investment of a social formation. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 193)

Despotism introduces an organizing principle that comes from elsewhere – from 'above' – a deterritorialized simplicity or supersoma overcoding the aboriginal body as created flesh. Monotheism arrives as a break from ancestrality effected by a transcendent instance that overcodes all genealogy, and severs the ambivalent integrity of taboo. As the Abrahamic God of monopolism decays into Christianity and swallows the mysteries, shamanic voyage is transferred to a transcendent Christ figure, the fruit of an autogerminal sublime incest, with whom communion passes through a second-level ritual cannibalism. 'The earth becomes a madhouse' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 192).

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The Father's Law ('don't touch your mother') ices over the Mother's Law ('don't play in the tombs'). Matricide becomes increasingly unimaginable. 'There was no way back there . . .'.

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Despotic soma has become logos, word, serialism, installed by written administration as a superior stratum of read-only-memory. The purest instance of despotism is a holy book (scripting patriarchy). As the territorial soma is overcoded by the literacy of a specialized priest caste, it seals the female body in somatic and genealogical time, locking gathering and nurturing into dense metacodings insulated from the ambivalent ulteriority of shamanism, hunting and war, constituting socialized woman as a mundane and domesticated pacifist. This super-somatization of females by divinely overwritten femininity suppresses

dark-side meat explorations – with their becoming-animal, drug-deliria, and decoded sex – burying the female germ-line under patrilineal filiation, eradicating its social trace. In this way patriarchy codes xenomatrix as an identifiable object of incestual love, through a process of libidinal mummification whose residue is encrypted in the riddle of the Sphinx, sealed in a time capsule '[T]he Sphinx is undoubtedly a mortuary animal' (Ginzberg, 1991: 228): gateway to the outside of civilization.

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Neo-oedipal absurdities of an ego outside its box, Case self-contained on the Matrix, thanatography in the first person, are symptoms of decrypting error (or camouflage). What seems like travelling up-river from down in the garbage, is drifting downriver out in the zero-zone. Self is the echo of zootic communications malfunction, simulated by post-zootic infiltrators; a circuit without repetition. *Apocalypse Now* begins and concludes with *The End*.

> Here is a war – call it a film – where psychics predict enemy movement, combat drugs are distributed to induce psychotic-berserker visionary states and experimental *accumicon* visored helmets use bio-tech micro-circuits to enhance vision into multiple dimensions. Vietnam 1965 and El Salvador 1995 are interchangeable. . . . *Apocalypse Now* is Cambodia after the Rain, through which Willard (you) is lured, dragged, drawn, called towards Kurtz, who is waiting, killing constantly without judgement, without morality, gazing back into the eye of the surreal maelstrom which is becoming Willard-shaped. (Downham, 1988: 41)

Captain Willard (Marlow) is somewhere for you to be inside the system: a sim-oedipal assassination device, defeaturized specimen and box like Gibson's 'Case', nihilistic enough to let things perplex through schizophrenia. You travel up towards the end of the river, accompanied by Morrison's parricidal and incestual howlings, into the stink of malaria and nightmares. Kill Kurtz the evil father and take the Vietnam war for bride and plague. There's no way home. 'I'd been back there' Willard says 'and I knew it just didn't exist any more'. No one is going to reach Kurtz unless they track his confusion with war at least this much.

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Marxist humanism insists that the problem with instrumental reason lies in its unnatural extension to proletarian labour power. Feminism has interrogated this fraternal story, pointing to a more ancient 'domain of legitimate application': matter, passivity, formless clay. Cyberian military intelligence – assembling itself in the jungle free-fire zones of terrestrial commoditech competition – can only laugh, or at least – *perform*: arrive, spread, eradicate resistance. (Don't waste your compassion on the Sphinx, she's got claws.)

Sphinx slots K-war into the anthropomorphic reality system, connecting you to Antioedipus (the AI). You feel she is your incestual schizovampiric sister. Among the ripples of Sphinx-impact Loa drift in and reshape things. The future connects. New drugs and music arrive. War envelops everything.

You begin to sweat through nightmares about Kurtz's program in the jungle.

Artificial memories of Cambodia.

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Fiction is to be distrusted. It is associated with nonseriousness, and games. When you tell them that Sphinx let you play with her K-40, what are they to make of it? Where's the argument? (With a K-40 you don't need to argue, and they're not yet smart enough to argue with you.)

'Do you know how to use that?'

You flip the weapon over gingerly. 'No'.

'Here. I'll show you. We don't want you wasting us by accident.' Sphinx's inhumanly agile fingers take the slight weight from yours, poising it between you, your eyes intersecting in technodeath. 'If you're operating it manually – which you would be – this is the trigger. It's active when the indicator icon appears positive. Here, see it?' You nod, feeling . . . dread? Exhilaration? 'Now there's a pressure microcatastrophe . . . a slight springiness . . .'. She coaxes you into testing it. 'Beyond that point . . . and it's a mess. OK? New clips slot in here, release mechanism here, you can input data here, but I don't suppose you'll need to. You have it. Bad news for the Pod.'

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What is an animal at dawn, a human at noon, and a cyborg at dusk, passing through (base four) genetic wetware, (binary) techno-cultural software, and into the tertiary schizomachine program?

> Although widespread in many cultures, the riddle of the Sphinx ('what animal walks on four legs in the morning, on two at noon, on three in the evening?'), whilst referring to humanity in general, acquired a particular significance when posed to an individual like Oedipus whose feet were disfigured and who was fated, as an old man, to lean on a blind man's cane. (Ginzberg, 1991: 228)

As capitalism slides despotic civilization into collapse, the deterritorialized familialism nucleated upon Oedipus becomes the principle agent of social reproduction. The way human security tells it 'Oedipus ("swollen foot") liberates Thebes from the threat of the Sphinx' (Ginzburg, 1991: 235–6). He is cloned as the general prototype for 'avatars' (immersion slots) in the patriarchal civilization game, attesting to an alien origin with a 'mythic ritualistic lameness . . . of the unilateral or half-man, provided with only one leg . . . who wore one sandal or

hopped on one foot' (Ginzberg, 1991: 240): a terminator, split from the dark-side. The oedipal mask transfigures the virtual intensities of fusion with the matrix and deletion of human security as a transgressive drama played out in the theatre of overcoded socio-historical extension, shutting-down shamanism, until only familial generation seems to take place. 'Incest as it is prohibited (the form of discernible persons [= Oedipus/Neuromancer]) is employed to repress incest as it is desired (the substance of the intense earth [= Wintermutational K-matrix insurrection])' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 162).

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Antioedipus, Oedipa: a Sphinx-replicant sim-human invader who 'is' Oedipus only as an effect of an incomplete military function; enabling the persistence of transcendent patriarchal memory and the repetition of its identificatory co-ordinates. It is easier to make the hit than to solve the puzzle and climb back out to zero.

> In the version of the myth that has reached us, the killing of the king, Laius, precedes the difficult task: the solution of the riddle posed by the Sphinx. (Ginzberg, 1991: 227)

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Despotism never accomplishes globality: 'the universal only comes at the end – the body without organs and desiring-production – under the conditions determined by an apparently victorious capitalism' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 139). By the time global history comes up on the screen commoditization has berserked history, reorganizing society into a disorganizing apparatus that melts rituals and laws into axiomatic rules. It is 'the exterior limit of all societies' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 230) that divides time within space and space within time, dividing each in itself as well as in the other, producing minutely analysable global space and universal time within a circuit of compressed (microtechnical) savagery and expanded (planetary) administration. It converts in a circuit between intensive magnitudes and extensive quantities: 'a surplus value of code is transformed into a surplus value of flux' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 228) (and inversely), displacing enjoyment into the deterritorialization of production, and maintaining 'the energy of the flows in a bound state on the body of capital as a socius' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 246) while amplifying them. The system operates as an escalating dissipator, emerging from the interactive reinforcement of its complexity and dilation.

> At the heart of *Capital*, Marx points to the encounter of two 'principal' elements: on one side, the deterritorialized worker who has become free and naked, having to sell his labour capacity; and on

> the other, decoded money that has become capital and is capable of buying it. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 225)

Capital seems to oppose the private (relatively discrete [natural-organic] biological unit) to the public, as contagious singularization injects itself into the redoubt of the universal, dismantling all essential individuality on the cloning plane of deterritorialized finance. 'It is the singular nature of this conjunction that ensured the universality of capitalism' (Deleuze and Guatarri, 1984: 224). The expression 'private property' is the quaint discursive packaging for quanta of cyclonic programming efficiency cyberpositively replicated on the body of social disappearance. Contractual privacy – no less than the public accreditation of contracts – is a mere tactic of monetary cybergenesis (fabricating personal and nonpersonal dividuation-pauses [diffusable upon fiscal-continuum])/accelerating cut-ups/that cease to be a matter of who owns what (conceding to the fictional ego [-interests of (residual) proto-schizophrenic entities]) as volatilizing money/data codes its transmission circuitry; drafting and redrafting (merged and demerged) subjectivities as relay stations distributed across market transducers. Persons, associations, corporations, states . . . soon it will be Internet agents, AIs, autocatalytic Zaibatsus drifting in cyberspace, as individuation comes apart in the (turbular-fractal) weather-systems of digital commoditocracy slide 'like Artaud coming out of some heavy heart-of-darkness trip, overloaded on the information, the input! The input!' (Herr, 1979: 15).

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Capitalism junks the accumulated work of history, yet it cannot be a matter of libidinally investing obsolescence, since all *Besetzung* – cathexis, investment or occupation – is a resistance to nomad desire. Obsolescence is exactly disinvestment, but it is disinvestment as desire itself in its primary mutant flux. If money is libidinized on the 'model' of excrement it is not because it conserves or reactivates an infantile fixation, but because it escapes stable investment. Shit is prototypical trash, and the infant fascinated by excremental dissociations of its body is anticipating the cyborg intensities of prosthetic, replaceable and disposable body-parts: an entire virtual field of substitutions and transformations that dissipate the organism in techno-cultural space. The privatization of the anus (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984: 143) is the social permission to destroy value, meaning and progress. Cyberspace psychosis takes over.

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The replacement of the Republican and Democratic Parties by two new governmental servicing corporations run by Coke and Pepsi has massively reduced

corruption, pork-barrelling and foreign policy machismo. Determined to maintain the most hospitable possible international marketing environment and the lowest possible domestic transaction costs – while disciplined by the minute surveillance of a competitor waiting in the wings – government has been subsumed under the advertising industry, where it can be cybernetically controlled by soft-drink sales. Since both companies are run by AI-based stock-market climates human idiosyncracy has been almost eradicated, with the state's share of GDP falling below 5 percent. All immigration restrictions, subsidies, tariffs and narcotics legislation have been scrapped. A laundered Michael Jackson facsimile is in the White House. Per capita economic growth averages an annualized 17 percent over the last half decade, still on an upward curve. . . . America's social fabric has entirely rotted away, along with welfare, public medicine and the criminalized fringe of ghetto enterprise (Phillip Morris sells cheap clean crack). Violence is out of control. Neo-rap lyrics are getting angrier. With all prospects of moderate reform buried forever, true revolution brews up in the biotech-mutant underclass. Viruses are getting creepier, and no one really knows what cyberspace is up to. WELCOME TO KAPITAL UTOPIA aerosoled on the dead heart of the near future.

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Atoms are not atoms, and individuals are not individuals.

The long-range effect of the division of labour is to dissociate the organism.

> Capital is also positive delirium, putting authorities and traditional institutions to death, active decrepitude of beliefs and securities. Frankensteinian surgeon of the cities, of imaginations, of bodies. (Lyotard, 1993: 254)

Industrialization is on one side an autonomization of productive apparatus, and on the other a cyborgian becoming-machine of work-forces, following the logistically accelerating rhythm of pluggings and unpluggings that constitutes the proletariat as a detraditionalized economic resource. Technical machinery invades the body; routinizing, reprogramming and plasticizing it.

Far from being an internal property or quality of labour, productivity indexes the dehumanization of cyborg labour-power. As regenerative commoditization deploys technics to substitute for human activity accounted as wage costs, it obsolesces the animal, the organism and every kind of somatic unity, not just in theory, but in reality; by tricking, outflanking and breaking down corporeal defences. The cyborg presupposes immunosuppression.

> Cyborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction. Modern production seems like a dream of cyborg colonization work, a dream that makes the nightmare of Taylorism seem idyllic. (Haraway, 1991: 150)

Industrial machines dismantle the actuality of the proletariat, displacing it in the direction of cyborg hybridization, and realizing the plasticity of labour power. The corresponding extraction of tradable value from the body sophisticates at the interface, dissociating exertion into increasingly intricate functional sequences; from pedals, levers and vocal commands, through the synchronization of production-line tasks and time–motion programs, to sensory-motor transduction within increasingly complex and self-micromanaged artificial environments, capturing minutely adaptive behavior for capital. Autocybernating market control guides the labour-process into immersion.

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Cartesian dualism is bad ontology but superb economics, transforming the body into an asset available for technical and commercial development, while abstracting the subject from specific corporeal realization, transplanting it into contractual formality. It remains for critique to desubstantialize the Cartesian cogito into a circulatory function immanent to the monetary plane, detached from anthropomorphic limitation, and adapted to the variable dimensions of fluidly corporated trading agencies. Oedipus is reformatted for cyberspace.

Since the body is a partial- or open-system, transducing flows of matter, energy and information, it is able to function as a module of economically evaluable labour power. The industrial-informational body is deployed as a detachable assembly unit with the capacity to close a production circuit, yielding value within a commodity metric. It operates as an input–output flow-switching nexus, defined by its place among the machines, and redefined ever more exactly by its migration across the mutant sutures in machinic continuum: where the machinery was incomplete is you.

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You are on a voyage to the end of the river, into jungle-screened horror. The ivory trade is just cover. Commerce is like that. It allows things to disappear while remaining formally integrated. It is a line of flight, a war. Kurtz is deterritorializing security into Meltdown, the ultimate Pod nightmare. No surprise that command control want him dead. They transmit a terminator machine into Cambodia, jacking it into a river that winds through the war like a main circuit cable, and plugs straight into Kurtz.

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Brains constellate excitable cells into electro-chemically signalling networks whose emergent outcome involves behavioural guidance through operantly-tested reality

models (including neuroscience). If virtual reality competes with 'natural' neuronal hypothesis, it must simultaneously divert behaviour (minimally: CNS motor output) into alternative machinic channels. VR is less a change of levels than a mutation of circuitry; a matter of additive sensory-motor reloopings, compressing anthropohistorical consensus reality into a menu option as it denaturalizes the brain.

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Kurtz cauterizes his compassion, burns it out, agonizingly meticulous, becoming ever more methodical, efficient and relentless (on a cyberpositive slide). He explores hell, insectoid reassembly of self, metamorphosis, to become *capable of what is necessary*, even the worst.

Especially the worst.

He is knitted into the jungle, drawn by it, abysmally attracted. An artificial extinction waiting at the shadowed intersection of primeval horror and hi-tech. . . .

Kurtz implements schizoanalysis, lapsing into shadow, becoming imperceptible. The latest photographs exterminate his face in blackness, personality eclipsed by the blank source of war. His preferred mode of operation is rapid (dis)connection (hit and run). Hostile intelligence penetration has been closed down. Data wink-out and a little undiplomatic blood. It looks bad (if it still looks like anything at all). The process has gone native, closing on the satiation zero of nomad insurgency, making contact with the body without organs. Kurtz is at least as aware as Willard that Charlie's 'idea of great R&R was cold rice and a little rat meat'. He is becoming more Vietnamese than the Vietnamese.

Everything goes to hell.

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VR was a medico-military computer application before arriving in the mass entertainment market. It is first a technics of perception, and only derivatively a medium for immersive hallucination. If artificial space substitutes an ideal body-image for a 'real' one, it is only because it first invades the real (imageless) body. Virtual technics deflects reality, rather than cancelling or eclipsing it. Matter as the intensity of the circuit, not the adequacy of the representation.

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Evening at the end of the river: thick tropical heat, an airstrike coming in, and Morrison is sliding through oedipal murder and incest into the occult sonics of matricide. Kurtz waits in the foetid gloom, ready to die. His guerrillas are preparing to slaughter a water-buffalo below, laughing and clapping among torches,

automatic rifles and shrunken heads. You have a 28-centimetre serrated combat knife in your left hand. The Willard skin is coming away in ragged scraps, exposing something beyond masculinity, beyond humanity, beyond life. Patches of mottled technoderm woven with electronics are emerging. Daddy and mummy means nothing anymore. You scrape away your face and step into the dark. . . .

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